

European Contexts for Vocational Integration: Disability and Employment

UEmploy European Report



UEmploy: Consultancy for Employment Inclusion
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Executive Summary

Throughout the modern experience of disability and associated rehabilitative interventions, an orientation to vocational training and employment has been historically central. The right to work and to participate in meaningful economic activity is one of the fundamental issues for disabled people internationally. The European Union's involvement in disability issues had originally been structured in terms of European Social Fund activities in relation to vocational training. In the 1980s, however, it began to promote a wider consideration of social measures and instruments to secure the rights, responsibilities and inclusion of disabled citizens.

European Union strategy stresses the need for approaches that focus on the removal of barriers, which prevent people with disabilities from achieving full citizenship. European employment strategy for those with disabilities is strongly focused on rights, equality of opportunity, social partnership and anti-discrimination legislation. The foundation of this is the *Directive for Equal Treatment in Employment (2000/78/EC)* adopted in November 2000.

The changing nature of the European employment market is a matter of prime concern to national governments in developing policies and strategies to meet the needs of their workforces. To these labour market trends must now be added the cumulative effects of socio-economic crisis since 2008. These effects have had and will continue to have a significant impact on the employment prospects of disabled Europeans. This Report demonstrates a set of common issues at European level, which in turn reflect the uneven and differentiated levels of development in disability inclusion at national level.

The general findings and conclusions from the national reports derived from the *UEmploy* project¹ demonstrate some significant similarities.

Some of the key common themes identified include:

Policy and Legislation

- In countries where employment legislation exists, it is only partially understood or not enforced.
- External impetus for national legislative and policy initiatives often predominates.
- National policy and strategies are often aspirational and inconsistent lacking practical tools for implementation by target groups.
- A review of national and European legislation on employment of people with disabilities is required, including areas for development.

Classification of Disabilities

- There is a lack of common understanding and definition of disability.
- The classification and definitions of disabilities require standardization across Europe.

Stigmatization

- There is a strong legacy of segregation rather than mainstream employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- There is evidence of inherent discrimination through the use of quotas and other measures.
- Employer resistance to employing disabled workers is demonstrated powerfully by the fact that in most countries they would rather pay the fine than hire people with disabilities as recommended by national quotas. The fact that these fines subsequently fund segregated sheltered employment or specialized rehabilitative training units only adds to the difficulties.

¹ UEmploy is supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission as part of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme see Section 2 or <http://www.uemploy.eu>

- Companies and employers lack knowledge, awareness and skills in order to hire people with disabilities.
- There is an invisibility of disability in public or employment related discourse.
- Persisting levels of fear, prejudice, ignorance or disinterest are widespread throughout society, which hinders employment opportunities.

Research

- A review is required of current models of employment currently available in EU countries including a comparative analysis of international rehabilitation standards.
- There is a need for a standardized European approach to gathering and analysing statistical information around hiring people with disabilities, their experiences and the opportunities available.
- Unemployment rates are in most cases generalized; a standardized approach to analysing unemployment rates taking in to account wider demographic trends is recommended.
- Experiences of disability must be linked to the wider socio-economic and demographic factors in particular the importance of attaining an inclusive education in order to gain mainstream employment.

Quota Systems

- A consistent element found in the national reports was reliance on quota systems and schemes to secure some participation (often any participation) in the labour market. These schemes are often crude attempts to insert people based on medical characteristics rather than on vocational skills or employability norms.

Acquired Disabilities

- Disability rates link to ageing. It is important to look at the link between disabilities acquired while working - raising issues around not just recruiting disabled people but retaining people once they become disabled

Models of Disability

- Medicalization is a common approach to disability among professionals and public authorities
- A Human Rights based approach is identified to enable greater awareness and impact.

Training and Development

- Staff training and professional development is completely neglected in most environments
- All the national reports demonstrated a lack of consistent and independent professional training, which itself should be based on principles of independent living, universal design, access and job modifications that could secure better outcomes for employers and employees with disabilities alike.

Best Practice

- Practice should move from punitive systems to employ people with disabilities to quality measures that produce shared benefit is a strategic goal for best practice
- There is a need for clear policy leadership role backed up by evidence-based best practice.

Consultancy

- Pre-employment screening, assessment and post-placement supports are highly valuable but usually missing. Critical need for consultancy development has been identified

UEmploy aims to address these gaps by the development of innovative supports and the facilitation of meaningful employment-based inclusion for disabled labour market entrants. The consultancy process provides a structured decision making/risk analysis procedure which offers solutions for people with disabilities and employers to choose the best working positions and job profiles for the appropriate type of disability.

UEmploy partners intend to sustain and promote a consultancy network with a view to accrediting the consultancy process which will impact directly on people with disabilities, employers and policy makers to achieve inclusive employment through out Europe.

Section 1

Overview

Throughout the modern experience of disability and associated rehabilitative interventions, an orientation to vocational training and employment has been historically central. At the core of efforts, in all countries, to secure equal rights and social inclusion for people with disabilities has been some form of concentration on work as both a means and an end. This focus on work stems from attitudes, rooted profoundly in legislative provision, belief and practice. Some of these attitudes were essentially charitable. Other perspectives viewed work as restorative or compensatory for those (particularly war-wounded veterans) who had acquired disabilities. The powerful resonance of exclusion linked to the experience of disability has coloured many social approaches and policies, not least of which is access to the labour market.

In the *medicalized context* of disability (and associated specialized rehabilitation programmes) work has been linked to both therapeutic enhancement and the restoration of optimal level of functioning. In the *welfare and social security context* of disability, work has been seen as the most effective mechanism to restore individuals to productive levels of functioning and to reduce costs to the state. In *charitable* models of disability, work has been viewed as a path to meaningful activity and providing some form of day care or occupational therapy for those deemed unable to participate more effectively in society.

For those with disabilities, particularly in the context of the significant advances of the Independent Living movement and civil rights focus, these traditional models of work have been seen as problematic. At best, they have been viewed as patronizing. At worst, these models are regarded as diminishing the abilities, capacities and potential of those with disabilities to participate as gainfully employed citizens in their own right.

Work is central to the dignity, self-confidence and social meaning of individuals. Work gives people a valued identity and a sense of sociological belonging. Work validates the activities and standing of individuals with relation to their lived experiences and in their relationships with others in the community. It is no accident therefore that services and interventions for people with disabilities have concentrated on vocational aspects.

Making the transition from dependence and institutionalization to independence and contributory citizenship has almost universally been viewed as centring on a vocational approach. In this, skills acquisition and securing employment are effective paths to a valued existence.

The changes that have swept the world of disability and professional rehabilitation in recent decades have also drawn explicitly on models of civil rights and legal redress for discrimination experienced. This process, by no means completed, has re-appropriated work and employment as a measure of inclusion rather than as a mechanism to secure recovery. In this dynamic, disability has reasserted its right to redefine work in terms of what benefits it can bring to those with disabilities rather than as an externally determined construct into which people must be obliged to fit.

The right to work and to participate in meaningful economic activity is one of the fundamental issues for disabled people internationally. In the long history of social interventions around disability (and the specific contributions of vocational rehabilitation perspectives and techniques) the ability to work and contribute to society has been viewed as central to the assertion of other civic rights. This process is based on the fact that improvements in ability to work and to live independently bring about parallel enhancements in other areas of an individual's life.

The *UEmploy* project, supported by the Leonardo da Vinci program, is based on quantitative and qualitative research carried out within the project partnership. It is based on the identified significant implementation gaps for European companies around issues of Equal Opportunities (EO) and work rights for disabled people. EU research focusing on the context and strategies of rehabilitation as ingredients of change management forms the basis of this project.

1.0 European Contexts

Central to European growth and development strategy is the concept of employment. The ability to find and retain work is viewed as fundamental to human development. Employment is more than simply being able to earn money for a task performed. It is seen as central to human identity and development and is an essential constituent of personal identity. It also forms the basis of all European training and social support mechanisms.

In a situation where the fundamental characteristics of work and employment have been transformed by the pace of change it still remains true that work, however constituted, is central to the participation and development of human beings in society. It is for this reason that European employment strategies and interventions have been the foundation of wider social and community approaches.

The European Employment Strategy was first outlined in 1992 and subsequently developed by the Employment Treaty in the Treaty of Amsterdam. This prioritized promotion of employment and required Member States to co-ordinate policies so that employment is developed in the context of balanced and sustainable economic and social progress.

Subsequently the Council of Ministers adopted a series of Employment Guidelines in December 1997. These were based on four key themes which national employment action plans in each Member State were required to reflect. These four themes became priorities for EU social action initiatives, as well as forming the foundation for the subsequent Lisbon Declaration in 2000. They are:

- Employability
- Entrepreneurship
- Adaptability
- Equal Opportunities

The European Union's involvement in disability issues had originally been structured in terms of European Social Fund activities in relation to vocational training. In the 1980s, however, it began to promote a wider consideration of social measures and instruments to secure the rights, responsibilities and inclusion of disabled citizens. While recognizing the widely different approaches, understandings, mechanisms and policies of Member States in relation to disability, the EU began to promote some common initiatives.

First among these was the Helios Programme, which ran until 1996. This, among other things, influenced the European Union's Council of Ministers to adopt a report, *A New European Community Disability Strategy*, which endorsed and expanded the United Nations' Standard Rules. Specifically, this report re-asserted the principles of employment and non-discrimination as the key elements in developing social inclusion for people with disabilities.

Since 1988, the European Commission has actively promoted co-operation in the field of disability. As a follow-up to its medium term Social Action Programme, the Commission is currently tabling a communication and a Council resolution on the equalisation of opportunities and non-discrimination for disabled people which should, inter alia, endorse at EU level the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities adopted in 1993. In practice, this resolution would represent a major commitment on the part of Member States to equal opportunities for disabled people. It would contribute both to the gradual raising of standards towards best practice at national level and to increased co-ordination at EU level.

(European Commission 1996)

At European level, these concerns were also acknowledged in various studies and reports. Among these was one undertaken for the *European Centre for Professional Training and Development*, CEDEFOP, in 1992. This examined the needs and requirements of those with disabilities to access and sustain employment. While reviewing training and support mechanisms, it focused on the varying needs of different disability categories and the crucial issue of appropriate and meaningful assessment with regard to appropriate placement to employment.

It noted:

Given appropriate assistance, people with such severe physical disabilities have just as much chance of vocational integration as the slightly disabled. Their vocational integration depended on their intellectual abilities and the earliest possible transfer from a special to a normal school. The prospects of this group are therefore rated so low because of ignorance and incorrect assessments of their actual capabilities. Much the same applies to the blind or the visually handicapped, the mentally handicapped and the emotionally disturbed, whose employment prospects are similarly rated low. Here again potential employers are likely to be fairly uncertain.

(Cedefop 1992, p.45)

The European perspective has stressed the linkage of inclusion for people with disabilities via appropriate employment with enhanced equality of opportunity. In its Resolution on the *Equality of Opportunity for People with Disabilities* published in 1997, the European Commission, while recognizing that the primary responsibility for action lay with individual Member States, nonetheless laid out a set of key guiding principles.

It further recognized that European societies are largely structured around the needs of “average” citizens without any disability and, therefore, those with disabilities were excluded from the rights and opportunities of the vast majority. The prime areas of exclusion for those with disabilities were identified by the Commission:

- In education - segregate systems with restricted access to mainstream resources, including good quality training
- At work - high rates of unemployment and discriminatory employment practices
- Mobility and access - inaccessibility of public transport and public buildings
- Housing - scarcity or prohibitive expense of adapted or adaptable housing
- Welfare systems - minimum support, bureaucratic complexity and restriction.

The Commission considered it could best play a role by using its own resources and in encouraging Member States, in all their diversity, to stress common standards and targets for inclusion. The Commission considered that a strategy for concrete actions to develop equality of opportunity for Europeans with disabilities could best be advanced by the following initiatives:

- Mainstreaming
- Co-operation
- Encouragement of the work of NGOs
- Employment
- Information and communications technologies
- EU Structural Funds.

The European response of mainstreaming has had a dramatic effect on national policy formulation and structural responses to the needs of people with disabilities.

Mainstreaming for the European Commission is defined as:

The formulation of policy to facilitate the full participation and involvement of people with disabilities in economic, social and other processes, while respecting personal choice. It also means that relevant issues should no longer be considered separately from the mainstream policy-making apparatus, but should be clearly seen as an integral element.

(COM96 - 406; Section 19)

European Union strategy stresses the need for approaches that focus on the removal of barriers, which prevent people with disabilities from achieving full citizenship. This framework underlines the need to enhance co-operation of governments with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the area of disability. Co-operation between NGOs and social partners (i.e. employers and trade unions) is also regarded as central to policy with regard to the occupational integration of people with disabilities.

A set of policy documents, employment guidelines and a compendium of good practice were produced by the European Commission (European Commission 1998).

European employment strategy for those with disabilities is strongly focused on rights, equality of opportunity, social partnership and anti-discrimination legislation. The foundation of this is the *Directive for Equal Treatment in Employment (2000/78/EC)* adopted in November 2000.

1.1 Work, Employment and Disability

Parallel to a lack of harmonized job standards in Europe is a lack of common definitions of disability. In spite of the large number of people identified with disabilities there are still no reliable European-level statistics. Comparison is complicated by the fact that different data collection methods are used in each country. While this makes direct comparisons difficult, nonetheless broad trends can be discerned across all national environments. One is the low rate of participation in the labour market in all countries of people with disabilities. Employment rates have been calculated as 20% to 30% below that of non-disabled Europeans (European Commission 2007).

Many of those with disabilities who have entered the labour market have very poor basic educational levels. Therefore disabled Europeans are more often employed in low-skill jobs than their non-disabled peers. Where data exist (France, Spain, Germany, Sweden and Ireland), they show that people with disabilities are over-represented in low-skilled or unskilled jobs. This is directly related to the fact that they are in general employed in low paid jobs. Lack of statistical standardization cannot hide the fact that Europeans with disabilities experience substantially higher rates of unemployment, underemployment and below-standard rates of pay and conditions (EIRO 2002).

The data, however fragmented, also show that the range of jobs accessed by those with disabilities is clustered at the unskilled and low-skilled levels. There is no consistent Europe-wide information available for disabled workers compared with non-disabled workers with reference to the sector of employment, contract duration, type of employment or size of company. Data provided from the few countries which do systematically collect such information, show that there exist, to a greater or lesser extent, considerable differences between disabled and non-disabled.

Across the world governments are stressing the need to upgrade the skills and competencies of their populations. Effective reforms and changes are difficult to implement because of the number, range and diverse interests of the sectors, agencies and institutions involved.

This has led to a general agreement among public policy makers in most countries - but particularly in Europe - that extending and upgrading workers' skills, competencies and knowledge must be a lifelong process. This is necessary if economies are to foster the creation and extension of high-skill, high-wage job opportunities. Particularly in the European context this has meant a governmental recognition that education and training policies should be directed not only at furthering economic and employment goals but, equally importantly, achieving other social, environmental and cultural objectives.

The changing nature of the European employment market is a matter of prime concern to national governments in developing policies and strategies to meet the needs of their workforces. In all countries, jobs have been disappearing in agriculture. The extent of employment in traditional sectors or heavy industry has decreased markedly. At the same time there has been a growth in newer and service sectors, including tourism, finance, insurance, hospitality, social, informatics, technology, community and personal services. Europe has also witnessed a steady growth in the numbers of self-employed as well as in part-time employment. These changes in the nature and pattern of employment related activities have obviously got enormous implications for the type of programs offered in education (compulsory, post-compulsory, continuing), training and job selection.

To these labour market trends must now be added the cumulative effects of socio-economic crisis since 2008. These effects have had and will continue to have a significant impact on the employment prospects of disabled Europeans. The severe restriction in public expenditure, governmental indebtedness in some countries, increased rates of privatization of public services and the critical impact of demographic change in terms of age and migration, all combine to put a new focus on inclusion in drastically more competitive external environments. The formation of a new European Disability Strategy 2010-20 specifically targets disability law, policy and employment.

While all European countries have some form of anti-discrimination legislation, practices and standards regarding employment and job-seeking strategies vary widely. Discrimination at work on the grounds of disability is explicitly forbidden by:

- National constitutions (Finland, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal)
- Disability-specific anti-discrimination legislation (France, Sweden, United Kingdom)
- General anti-discrimination legislation (Denmark, Ireland).

Most countries have in place specific laws and regulations regarding the occupational integration of people with disabilities. These centre on employment quotas, protection against dismissal, employer financial incentives, workplace adaptations, wage subsidies or fines. Job matching, placement techniques, vocational guidance strategies and occupational placement procedures are not standardized at all. In fact, standards and approaches within each country can vary widely and may even differ depending on the agencies sub-contracted to do this work or the specific disability category involved.

The use of job standards to define occupational skills required for employment and then to match prospective disabled employees to the job has not been systematically developed in Europe. This is reflected in the lack of a common profession such as Rehabilitation Counsellor. It is also seen in the very different understanding of assessment for welfare benefits or entitlements between the United States and European models. Where job evaluations are carried out in Europe, they may be done by medical or quasi-medical professionals, psychologists, occupational therapists or generic rehabilitation employment personnel employed by State agencies, government ministries or private/voluntary bodies (NGOs).

While some bodies have emerged in recent years to address the lack of a common professional framework for job analysis or standard for vocational rehabilitation specialists, they have emerged largely around medical rehabilitation centres (Heidelberg in Germany or Hoensbroek in the Netherlands), disability specific agencies (ONCE in Spain), or not for profit employment and training institutes (Rehab Group in Ireland).

These, and emerging professional groups like the European Platform for Vocational Rehabilitation (www.epvr.org) and the European Union of Supported Employment, have called for a common professional approach to the use of job standards in the occupational placement process. It seems unlikely however that national policies will adapt job standards and occupational analysis for anything more than statistical comparisons, placement techniques or policy development purposes at public level. Service providers and private employers have, however, begun to express considerable interest in how such methodologies can improve employee-job matching, assessment, return to work for disabled employees and training needs analysis.

This opens the field to designed and dedicated training and support interventions that address current needs, embody methodological excellence and build on traditions of best practice in other countries.

A contrast with the traditions and expertise of the United States may prove instructive. The independent living movement in the United States shifted the focus of disability away from the individual and toward the environment in which individuals function. This new paradigm assumed that people with disabilities can participate in all aspects of life if environmental barriers (e.g. physical, social, policy) are removed, if new assistive technology is made available and if new social arrangements can be designed to accommodate them. The high point of this view was the passage of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* in 1990. The major focus of disability activists and policy makers in the US is now about reducing barriers to, and creating new accommodations for, the employment of people with disabilities.

The impact of the ADA on the international disability movement has been notable. The ADA emerges however from a lengthy tradition of legislation in the United States in relation to disability. The first US programme for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities was initiated in 1918.

The important consideration about these legislative innovations is:

- They empower individuals to make choices regarding personal needs in securing employment
- They provide additional supports based on identified need to enable individuals to obtain and retain appropriate and meaningful employment.

US research points to recognized additional benefits in terms of significant indirect savings in public support costs to the degree that newly employed people with disabilities experience higher self-esteem, greater motivation and opportunity to be physically active, social interaction with workplace colleagues and reduced economic stress.

The link with the rights driven consumer movement and Independent Living perspective gives this a particular cogency when viewed from a European perspective.

The European Union, national governments, regional and local authorities have now developed new policy instruments - or reused old ones - to tackle emerging new challenges. However, in most cases this amounts to incremental adaptation of old policy instruments rather than the introduction of radically new mechanisms. The response to the new trends in the crisis is often partial or fragmented.

Employability training interventions can contribute to new vision and policy paradigms at all levels of social learning by addressing critical aspects of the globalizing learning economy and their associated policy implications. This is a challenge, given the theoretical framework in which the notion 'learning economy' is embedded - and also rapidly evolving in the contexts of economic re-structuring and equality of access.

The European Union's emphasis on a social market model and partnership has allowed the creation of thematic linkages across the Union. An influx of money, ideas and standards has created new prospects for social inclusion.

Pro-active policies have made a real difference in underlining the positive benefits from inclusion of new or marginalized communities in traditional workforces. If equality is located in a context of learning, it is enhanced greatly in the context of innovation. The opportunities of including those traditionally excluded become not problems to be solved but also challenges in advancing wider creative processes.

Grave problems persist throughout the European Union, despite achievement of free movement of goods and labour. Unemployment remains disturbingly high. Social and economic inequality has increased. Racism and discrimination have grown. In addition to all this, the EU has expanded to 27 members. This brings new issues and problems and will require adjustments at every level. The European Employment Strategy (and its four key themes which national employment action plans in each Member State reflect) now seems woefully inadequate and dated.

Despite these challenges, basic issues around equality of opportunity and labour market employability for disabled citizens are being addressed, if at all, in fragmented ways. Key issues around access, inclusion, training and competence development are often neglected. Ongoing issues and needs are affected by cost implications, ambiguities, resistance and an inadequate focus on human rights.

An assumption in Europe of stable work patterns and linear development is no longer possible. As a result, learning and vocational training systems must innovate and respond accordingly.

1.2 Common Themes

It is in this framework that this Report demonstrates a set of common issues at European level, which in turn reflect the uneven and differentiated levels of development in disability inclusion at national level. In creating effective and professional tools that address labour market realities, professional responses will need to factor these into account.

These themes, supported by national research, include:

- *Fragmentation*: service provision is historically segregated according to disability category, varying levels of legislation, professional interests, competition for scarce resources or models of medicalization. The impact of sector specific service provision has greatly hampered multidisciplinary approaches and professional shared learning about the socio-economic contexts of disability.
- *Charitable legacies*: in most European countries disability was removed from central discourse and often seen as a social or care issue, to be addressed in contexts of voluntary service provision. While some charities have grown dramatically to be enterprises in their own right, models of charity and voluntary donation remain stronger than rights based perspectives.
- *Institutionalization*: the growth of large asylums and institutional models of containment in the 19th century in all European countries has left a powerful legacy in terms of attitude, behaviour and practice. These institutions acted to remove large populations from active labour market participation and developed attitudes of disempowerment and exclusion. Overcoming these effects for both the institutionalized and the wider community has proved a significant challenge.
- *Strategy gaps*: very few countries have invested in development of national disability strategies that holistically encompass social, personal, legislative, educational and vocational rights and needs. Such strategy as exists may be partial or incomplete, lacking researched models of good practice or QA systems of regulation and standards.

Enforcement of legal norms and standards, where it exists, is haphazard and inadequate. Statistics may not reflect reality due to inadequate or flawed methodologies employed.

- *Sectoral overlap*: while most human issues are interconnected, there are specific issues in relation to disability, vocational rehabilitation and mainstreaming that can be blurred in the application of increasingly scarce resources. Most important is the failure to distinguish from issues around care, nursing and ageing. One of the most common confusions is that between disability and illness. For healthy citizens who happen to be disabled, service should more appropriately be designed around education, training, ICT and engineering rather than medical models of care or ‘help’.
- *Independent living*: the impact of the Independent Living movement from its origins in the United States in the 1960s has been far-reaching and profound. IN Europe its understanding and application has varied significantly from country to country. Despite the existence of ENIL (European Network of Independent Living), no consistent strategy has been developed or norms implemented at European level. Interventions have remained fragmented and centre around transport or provision of personal assistants rather than embedded in laws than guarantee rights and quality of life, with particular regard to employment.
- *Quota systems*: no issue has generated more controversy than the relevance, impact and effectiveness in securing enhanced employment rates for disabled citizens. Many European countries developed quota systems after World War II. The tool was crude and only effective if linked to national strategy and plan (which it usually was not). Significant issues have emerged in terms of reliability, definitions, administration, tokenism and payments. In several countries employers have willingly paid fines rather than engage and employ disabled workers (this has been particularly evident in France). Quota definitions and implementation modes vary nationally.

There is no independent evidence that such systems (unsupported by trained staff or guideline standards on job standards) actually work even in their own terms.

- *Assessment:* there is no standardized European system for the definition, analysis, assessment and cross-referencing of people with disabilities set against definable employment norms. National levels of service vary significantly. A critical issue is the absence of a common professional identity for those involved in the selection, support, assessment and guidance of labour market entrants with disabilities. Common professional norms and standards are absent. Professional interventions may be supplied by paramedical groups, voluntary workers, psychologists or social workers. Employers consistently report inadequate professional screening, placement norms and follow-up supports - where they exist.
- *Welfare systems:* a distinguishing difference between European and US systems has been the availability of comprehensive welfare and subsidy systems. Traditionally the US has relied on a vigorous private system with minimal state support on intervention regarding allowances, payments and welfare (although this varies significantly between States and is off-set by massive provision of professional competence development, assessment standards, legislation and technical resources). In Europe more comprehensive welfare provision has often acted as a break on labour market entry. Benefits may be lost in conditions of open employment so there may be a reluctance to lose the security entailed by securing a job. This is being offset currently by the impact of the economic crisis and the severe restriction (or even dismantling) of traditional public welfare safety nets.

Section 2

2.0 *UEmploy* Project

The *UEmploy* project² has been supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission under the remit of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme.

The *UEmploy* project brings together expertise of seven partner organizations³ from Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Finland and Ireland to develop, test and introduce a consultancy model to promote effective employment outcomes for European citizens with disabilities.

The aim of the project is to create a range of services and solutions to support both people with disabilities and employers.

The path toward achieving this aim includes a number of activities. These include:

- National and European studies
- Development of consultancy tools
- Training of consultants
- Testing the designed schemes of consultancy process.

Many companies realize that inclusive employment is an effective strategy for a number of reasons. It enhances productivity and also meets corporate social responsibility targets. But most employers still have no real experience of employing a disabled person. Proactive cooperation with employers is needed. This counteracts stereotypes, prevents discrimination and demonstrates the real advantages that stem from using the skills and capacities of employees with disabilities.

²This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

³ See appendix 2 for further details on each partner organization

The evidence from across the world is that people with disabilities usually have difficulties in finding suitable employment due to unsuccessful approaches to strategy, which in turn may be based on negative public perceptions of disability and over-medicalization in such service provision as exists. As a result, their skills and abilities are often underestimated and they either can hardly find a job at all or are offered inappropriate job positions. This makes their eventual employment unstable. Services proposed by the project will help to improve this unfair situation.

Regarding employers, the project aims to provide a mechanism to guarantee effective selection processes so that to match the employer's need with the skills or qualifications of an applicant with disabilities. The use of this mechanism will help to make inclusive employment beneficial for the companies.

The project partners will support employers and give practical demonstrations of the tools and techniques that demonstrate how people with disabilities can become a valuable part of their personnel. This will cascade best practice in meaningful ways in work environments to promote inclusive employment outcomes.

2.1 National Reports

Each partner developed and compiled a National Report on the general situation regarding disability and employment and also identified best practices for employing people with disabilities. These reports included information about policies, laws and regulations regarding employment of people with disabilities in Romania, Finland, Ireland, Bulgaria and Hungary. As part of the report process each partner consulted with local employers examining their willingness to hire people with disabilities.

The following sections provide brief overviews of the current situations in respective partner countries regarding employment of people with disabilities.

Romania

The period of transition from a centralised economy to the market economy led to a decrease in living standards for disadvantaged and excluded groups - including those with disabilities. Traditional models regarding disability and rehabilitation relied heavily on medicalized interventions and highly institutionalized responses. Autonomy and choice were not fostered in highly centralized and hierarchic systems of care.

Recent legislation was introduced in 2006 (Law 448/2206 '*Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Disabled Persons*'). Amended in 2008, it encourages labour market entry for disabled workers. Employers - public and private - fulfill social obligations towards persons with disabilities by choosing one of the following:

1. Employing 4% of employees with disabilities (if workforce is over 50).
2. Paying a fine (50% of gross minimum wage multiplied by number of places not filled by disabled workers)
3. Buying products or services from specialized disability units.

However, research findings (compiled by the 'Media Monitoring Agency 2007') revealed that employers prefer to pay fines for not hiring persons with disabilities instead of actually hiring them. These attitudes match those in France, Hungary and Bulgaria where quota systems are also in place for employers to hire people with disabilities.

Hungary

The current system in Hungary uses several tools to encourage the employment of disabled people. A quota system is in place. Organizations employing more than twenty people (including the budget financed and non-profit organizations) have an obligatory quota that at least 5 per cent of staff should be disabled. If this quota is not met, the employer must pay a specified amount to the Labour Market Fund, to be used in turn for rehabilitation purposes. Companies employing less than 20 persons may receive tax benefits if they employ people with disabilities. If organizations employ disabled people above the specified quotas, they can receive wage subsidies.

Employers may receive other subsidies as well. This is a very strong incentive for companies to employ more disabled workers. Some companies work out a HR system to limit the risks while employing disabled people. Others pay the rehabilitation tax. A few companies employ only people with disabilities, hoping for significant cost reductions and increased effectiveness.

In 2010, in addition to the new constitution, politicians decided to reform the social system. Two major problems were identified: The number of people receiving the rehabilitation pension was exceptionally (about 800.000 people) and the employment rate of disabled people was too low (less than 5%). The reforms will be announced and implemented in 2011.

Ireland

Historically, people with disabilities in Ireland have experienced segregation in schooling, vocational education, training and in the terms under which they benefit from and access welfare. In recent years there has been a policy shift towards mainstreaming education, training and employment for people with disabilities. The Irish government has now begun to prioritize the issue of disability in government policy. The new policy content concentrates on enhancing two mutually supporting areas; disability specific services and access for disabled people to mainstream services.

Disability has increasingly been linked to wider equality perspectives: disability is one of the nine designated areas under the *Employment Equality Act (2005)*.

This act outlaws direct and indirect discrimination in employment on nine grounds, including disability. Section 16(3) of the Act states that:

- (a) A person who has a disability shall not be regarded as other than fully competent to undertake, and fully capable of undertaking, any duties if, with the assistance of special treatment or facilities, such person would be fully competent to undertake, and be fully capable of undertaking, those duties
- (b) An employer shall do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person who has a disability by providing special treatment or facilities to which (a) relates to
- (c) A refusal or failure to provide for special treatment or facilities to which paragraph (a) relates shall not be deemed reasonable unless such provision would give rise to a cost, other than a nominal cost, to the employer.

Employment related functions in the disability advisory process is delegated to the state training and employment authority FÁS. FÁS in some instances subcontracts these roles to voluntary specialized agencies. As part of the ongoing restructuring due to the economic crisis, FAS is being abolished in 2011.

Bulgaria

For many decades right up to the middle of the 1990s, Bulgaria was dominated by medical models of disability. The very definition of disability in Bulgaria up to today is explicitly medical - disability status is given as “percentage of lost labour capacity”, on the basis of medical diagnosis alone. There is no assessment with reference to the wider social, psychological or economic environment.

The Bulgarian population with disabilities is comprised of people with lasting health problems or with impairments (as defined by the UN Convention), all under the same statistical heading. Thus 'employment rates among disabled people' includes all employees with disability regardless of their impairment. This confuses the real picture of unemployment - most people with severe disabilities are unemployed, not to mention those with intellectual disabilities.

The disability pension is the main source of income for 72% of people with disabilities. Some 8% rely on support from another person; only 8% receive wages for work. Only 13% of the disabled in the country are currently employed.

The existing quota system is applied to businesses with >50 workers. It requires them to reserve 4% of the jobs for "people with reduced working abilities". Current procedures discourage employers from recruiting disabled people. To comply with this requirement some companies manage to circumvent their quota obligations by placing orders to 'special enterprises' (commercial entities registered under Bulgarian corporate law as trade companies or cooperatives which have a percentage of disabled workers in the overall employment). For example, enterprises for deaf people have to employ 30% of their workforce with disabilities, whereas this share in case of physical and visual impairments is 50%.

Taxation laws stipulate incentives for self-employment of disabled people. In addition, the Agency for Disabled People provides start-up business grants. People with disabled status are entitled to double tax-free income levels. Employers of disabled people benefit from corporate tax relief proportionate to the number of disabled people hired. Special enterprises are totally exempted from paying corporate taxes on the profit they make, as well as from paying local taxes. Most of new Bulgarian legislation passed after 1990 includes anti-discrimination clauses. Regulations related to employment are no exception.

The *Employment Promotion Act* forbids “...direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, age, gender, religion, political or trade unions affiliation, social and family status, physical or mental disabilities.”

The employment strategy for people with disabilities takes three forms:

- 1) Specialized enterprises and cooperatives of people with disabilities (covers the major part of the employed people with disabilities)
- 2) Inclusive work environment (much less developed)
- 3) Development of private business (with the financial support of the Agency for People with Disabilities).

Employment services for people with disabilities are only now emerging. They present a very topical issue on the agenda of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Providing employment mediation and consultancy is among the measures in the Long-term Strategy for Employment of People with Disabilities for 2011 - 2020 adopted by the Council of Ministers.

Finland

In Finland access of disabled people to employment is significantly more difficult than for their able-bodied peers. According to different studies, however, disabled people and those with partial ability to work constitute a significant labour reserve, which has remained largely unexploited. This is due to employers' attitudes - but also social policies, as a consequence of which many disabled people end up in retirement instead of working according to their ability to work. Increased participation in working life is now a political issue.

Current government programmes have adopted employment of disabled individuals as a goal to be achieved by means of mainstreaming principles. So far, these actions have produced few real employment results.

In the first years of the 21st century, there were 80,000-90,000 jobseekers with a disability. Of these, 37,000-44,000 annually are placed in the open labour market. The majority will find employment independently. Employment actions have helped to place 16,000-25,000 of these, which is the same number as those transferred out of the labour force. In practice, around a quarter of those classified with partial ability to work are placed in employment after dedicated placement efforts. Another quarter is transferred completely out of the labour market.

The annual retirement rate in Finland is almost equal for both disability and the old age pension. In 2008, 25,600 people retired on disability pension; the total number of people on disability pension was 272,878, of whom over 20,000 participate in working life. Under the social employment framework there are about 16,300 vocational training and /or employment places for people with disabilities.

2.2 Conclusions of all National Reports

The general findings and conclusions from the national reports demonstrate some significant similarities. These relate to patterns in the official understanding of disability and the critical legacies of often centuries of negative attitudes to the experience of disability. The perceptions of mainstream societies in most countries towards disability - and especially the potential of people with disabilities to secure and hold jobs in the open labour market on equal terms with non-disabled workers - are frequently negative and often prejudicial.

These attitudes are not removed in a few years. They underline powerfully the reasons why official responses in most countries to disability have been ones of tokenism at best or long term institutionalization at worst. The experience of institutionalization deeply affects both individuals and their families in mostly negative ways.

Institutionalization also serves to reinforce negative, fearful or patronizing opinions and attitudes in mainstream society and communities. Expectations remain low about the ability of disabled citizens to compete on an equal footing. The experience of institutionalization was also shown in all societies to be dominated by models of medicalization. The views that disability is somehow linked to illness or sickness were found to be widespread.

The national reports underlined a rigidly medical understanding in relation to categories, expectations, measurement and understanding of functional performance. The overwhelmingly medical nature of understanding of disability exists not just at popular or community level, but is also reflected in national policy approaches.

A consistent elements found in the surveys was the reliance on quota systems and schemes to secure some participation (often any participation) in the labour market. These schemes are often crude attempts to insert people based (again) on medical characteristics rather than on vocational skills or employability norms. Employer resistance to employing disabled workers is demonstrated powerfully by the fact that in most countries they would rather pay the fine for not doing so. The fact that these fines subsequently fund segregated sheltered employment or specialized rehabilitative training units only adds to the difficulties.

All the national reports demonstrated a lack of consistent and independent professional training, itself based on principles of independent living, universal design, access and job modifications that could secure better outcomes for employers and employees with disabilities alike.

Further key common identified points were:

- (1) Lack of viable statistics in certain cases, especially in reference to the definitions of disabilities (e.g. Romania).
- (2) Lack of disability research, in particular detailed analysis of employer–attitudes within the 7 partner countries in terms of employing people with disabilities.
- (3) The pathway to employment needs to start at a young age, access to appropriate education and training are key stepping stones for people with disabilities to gain mainstream employment.
- (4) The need for disability awareness for employers focusing on the capacities of people with disabilities
- (5) The lack of pro-active legislative supports/frameworks which motivates employers, while also taking into account individual needs and abilities of disabled people.
- (6) In most countries employment strategies and reform are provided in response to requirements of European and International legislation.
- (7) Few if any countries provided dedicated and impartial professional resources to support job placement supported by principles of objective vocational assessment, consent and shared added value with reasonable accommodations.

2.3 UEmploy Survey - Comparative Analysis

Aim

The focus of the survey centred on organisations' willingness to employ people with disabilities, their attitudes towards legislation and their successful or unsuccessful experiences of hiring people with disabilities.

Response

The survey was distributed to 88 organisations across Romania, Bulgaria, Ireland, Hungary and Finland. 52 companies (46%) in total responded via email and online. See breakdown below:

| Country | Responses Distributed | Responses Received |
|----------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Romania | 20 | 12 |
| Bulgaria | 32 | 11 |
| Ireland | 16 | 6 |
| Hungary | 20 | 12 |
| Finland | 23 | 11 |
| Total | 111 | 52 |

Target companies

A mix of organisations was targeted to complete the survey ranging from small scale to multi-national organisations with the number of people employees ranging from 1-1000.

Best practice

Responses from the survey provided examples of best practice which can be found in the subsequent results section.

Methodology

The survey was distributed to 111 organisations each of these organisations represented a mix of national, foreign, public, private, multi-national and NGOs. A mixed methods approach was utilised and the survey consisted of both quantitative and qualitative questions. Respondents were sent an information sheet including information in relation to *UEmploy*, the voluntary nature of their participation and guarantee of confidentiality.

Some organisations indicated that they were not comfortable discussing their current practices of hiring people with disabilities. The respondents who completed the questionnaire were anxious that their organisation would not be named and were nervous about any repercussions the findings may have, an interesting finding which was reflected across the consortium. The respondents were assured that it was a voluntary process, completely confidential and that all information provided would be unidentifiable.

Findings

The findings highlighted key issues which are of importance to a number of stakeholders namely employers, employees with disabilities, people with disabilities and policy makers.

There are some limitations which are important to highlight. The findings are not generalisable to the overall population and are context specific. However, key themes have been identified that provide insight to the current state of play of hiring people with disabilities across Romania, Ireland, Finland, Bulgaria and Hungary.

Key Results

1. 46% of respondents never employed a person with a disability
2. Type of disability- 44% of respondents hired people with physical disabilities at some point of time
3. 44% of respondents are aware of the stipulations of the current national legal provisions that refer to hiring people with disabilities.
4. 42% of the respondents found the current legal provisions stimulate companies to hire people with disabilities to a small extent. This indicates a requirement to review both national and international legislation in order to stimulate companies to hire people with disabilities.
5. 52% of the respondents were unaware if their HR policy facilitated employment. This is a clear indication that current policies will need to be updated and information will need to be disseminated to employers in order to develop and update HR policies which are receptive to the needs of people with disabilities.
6. The largest obstacle (42%) that may interfere with respondents hiring people with disabilities was the lack of job openings. However, this maybe due to the fact that the majority of respondents were small scale organisations. The second greatest (26%) obstacle identified was the lack of access to the work place. Further information of adaptations of the work environment need to be provided in order to facilitate hiring people with disabilities.
7. Measures to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities were identified and included: tailor made qualifications, training opportunities, disability awareness training for all staff, full accessible work environment, incentives for small organisations.
8. 31% of the respondents agreed that the costs of integrating people with disabilities are far greater then hiring someone with out a disability and the remaining respondents disagreed. Further information is required in particular in relation to adaptation grants.

9. Successful experiences of hiring people with disabilities were due to ensuring that facilities were put in place to accommodate the person's needs and the appropriate job was given based on the persons needs. Respondents also commented that attitudes of other staff improved and learned more in relation to disabilities.
10. Respondents outlined that specific problems arose when staff were unsure as to how to manage people with disabilities and that some staff attitudes found that productivity was lesser when they worked with people with disabilities. Again this relates to lack of information and appropriate facilities being in place.

For a detailed breakdown of survey results see appendix 3

Section 3

Key Results

3.0 Needs of Employers

- (1) Employers advocated for robust, supportive legislation with clear systems in place in order to employ people with disabilities.
- (2) Employers suggested improving and creating tailor made qualifications for people with disabilities within organizations.
- (3) Employers outlined that enhancing awareness focusing on people with disabilities capabilities and skills within the workplace will help to integrate people with disabilities and improve employee's attitudes towards disabilities.
- (4) Employers highlighted the need for clear systems/methods to follow when employing people with disabilities.
- (5)** Employers requested further information and knowledge around supports available for employing people with disabilities.

3.1 Needs of People with Disabilities

- (1) People with disabilities are entitled to the right to work and equal opportunities within the labour market.
- (2) There is a need for ongoing rehabilitation/training for people with disabilities specific to individual needs based on professional assessment.
- (3) The opportunity for inclusive education which enables people with disabilities to attain the qualifications required to compete within the current labour market.

3.2 Recommendations for Employers

- (1) Adapt mechanisms to guarantee effective selection processes so that to match employer's needs with the skills /qualifications of a potential disabled employee e.g. *UEmploy* consultancy programme.
- (2) Ensure all employees are provided with the knowledge and information to adhere to inclusive organizational policies
- (3) Use and research supports available to ensure an accessible environment in order to hire people with disabilities.

3.3 Recommendations for Policy Makers

- (1) There is a need for a standardized European approach to gathering and analysing statistical information around hiring people with disabilities, their experiences and opportunities available.
- (2) The current classification and definitions of disabilities require standardization across Europe.
- (3) Review of national and European legislation on employment of people with disabilities including areas for development is required.
- (4) The development of a national accreditation system derived from the *UEmploy* project.
- (5) Research current models of employment currently available in EU countries and compare with international rehabilitation standards
- (6) The route to employment begins with full inclusive access to education. For people with disabilities to attain employment and compete within the current labour market, the support framework needs to be put in place from an early age starting with access to education.
- (7) Provide alternative training initiatives to meet the individual needs of people with disabilities in order to gain employment in the mainstream arena.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

UEmploy Partner Information

| Partner Organization | Contact details | Logo |
|--|--|---|
| EuroEd Foundation (Romania) | 1C Florilor Street 700513 Iasi, Romania Tel. +40-232-252850 contact@euroed.ro www.euroed.ro |  |
| Context Learning (Finland) | Laivanvarustajankatu 3 00140 Helsinki, Finland Tel. +358407247651 info@context.fi www.context.fi |  |
| Enable Ireland Disability Services (Ireland) | 32F Rosemount Park Drive, Rosemount Business Park, Ballycoolin Road, Dublin 11, Ireland. Tel. +353 21 429 0434 tdatson@enableireland.ie www.enableireland.ie |  |
| Euroinform (Bulgaria) | 19 Slavyanska St, 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria Tel. +35929872135 euroinform01@euroinformbg.com www.euroinformbg.com |  |
| Tudásklaszter Társadalom (Hungary) | Zagrab u. 113, 6727 Szeged, Hungary Tel. + +36 62 637-760 zpg@t-online.hu www.tudasklaszter.hu |  |

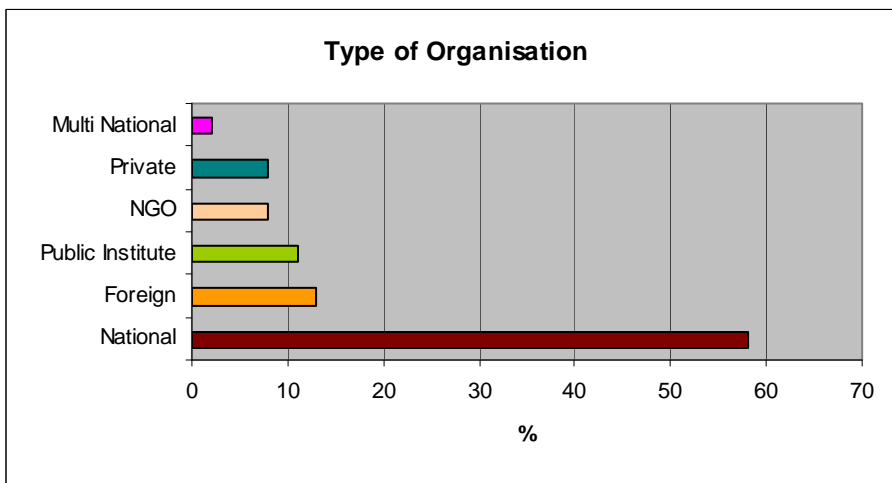
| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Universal Learning Systems (Ireland)</p> | <p>34 Charleville Road, Phibsborough, Dublin 7, Ireland Tel. +353 1 838 0970 info@ulsystems.com www.ulsystems.com</p> |  The logo for Universal Learning Systems features a stylized blue and white 'U' with a white dot above it, all enclosed within a white orbital ring. To the right of the graphic, the text 'UNIVERSAL LEARNING SYSTEMS' is written in a small, black, sans-serif font. |
| <p>VATES (Finland)</p> | <p>Oltermannintie 8, 00620 Helsinki, Finland Tel. +358 9 7527 551 vates-saatio@vates.fi www.vates.fi</p> |  The logo for VATES foundation consists of a stylized house shape with a green roof and a yellow base. Below the graphic, the word 'VATES' is written in a large, bold, black font, and the word 'foundation' is written in a smaller, black font underneath. |

Detailed Comparative Survey Analysis

Survey Results

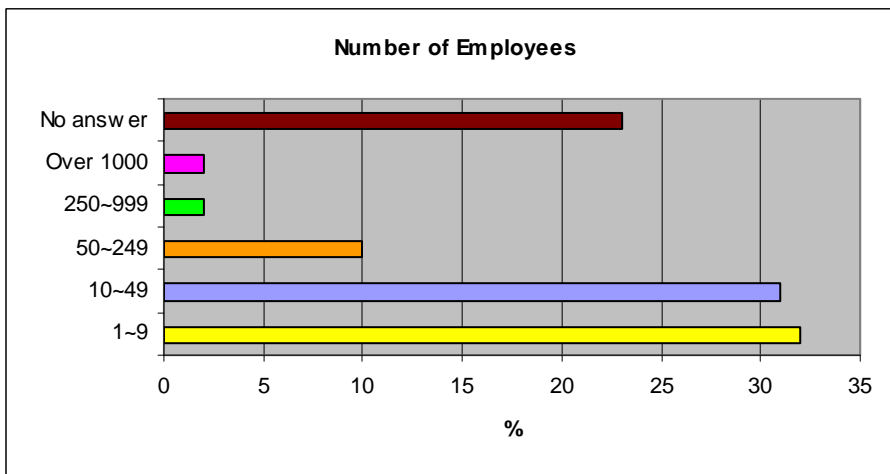
Results of the survey are as follows:

(1) Measuring awareness, willingness and capacity to employ people with disabilities (N= 52 Organisations)



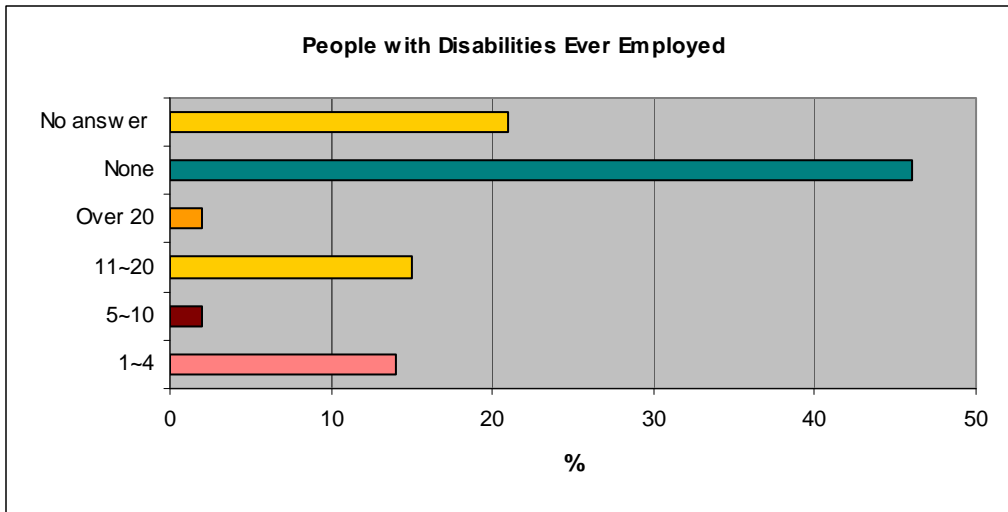
58% of companies are a National organisation. 13% are Foreign organisations. 11% are Public Institutes. 8% are NGOs, 8% are Private organisations and 2% are Multi- National organisations.

(2) Number of employees (N= 52 Organisations)



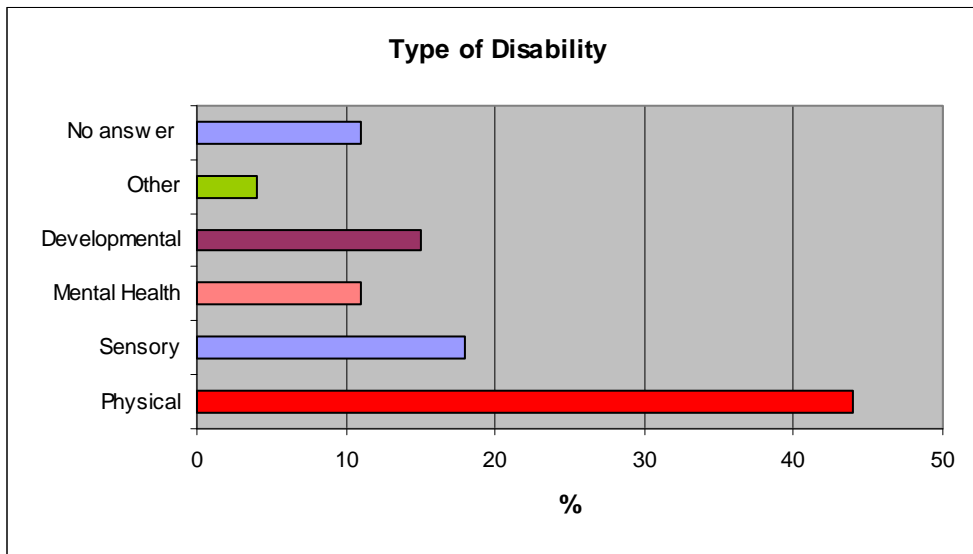
32% of the number of employees currently employed ranged from 1-9 employees. 31% ranged from 10-49 employees, 10% ranged from 50-249 employees, 2% ranged from 250-999, 2% ranged from 1000+. 23% did not respond.

Number of people with disabilities ever employed (N= 41 companies)



46% of organisations never employed people with disabilities. 21% did not respond. 15% of organisations employed 11-20 people with disabilities at some point of time. 14% of organisations employed 1-4 people with disabilities at some point of time. 2% of organisations employed 5-10 people with disabilities at some point of time. Finally, 2% of organisations employed over 20 people with disabilities at some point of time.

Type of disability currently or previously employed (N= 55⁴ companies)



44% hired at some point of time people with physical disabilities. 18% hired at some point of time people with sensory disabilities. 15% hired at some point of time people developmental disabilities. 11% did not respond. 4% specified other disabilities.

(5) Awareness of current legal provisions (N=52 Companies)

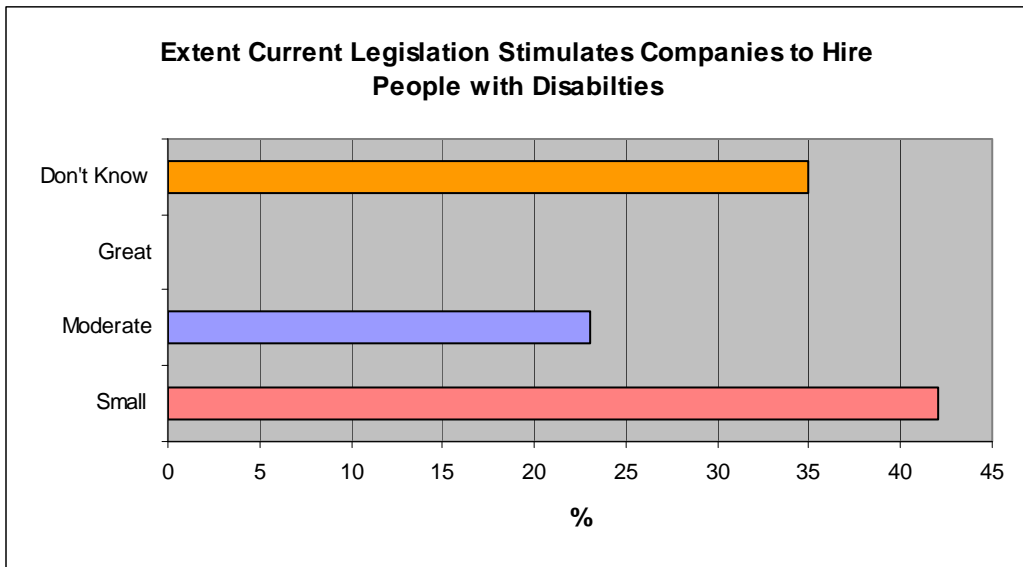
56% of companies are aware of the stipulations of the current national legal provisions that refer to hiring people with disabilities. 44% were not aware of the stipulations of the current national provision that refer to hiring people with disabilities.

Further comments included:

- *“If you have over 50 employees you must hire persons with disabilities in a certain percentage, if not, you have to pay a fee to the state”*
- *“Organisations are obliged to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities”*

⁴ More than one option was chosen

Current legislation (N=52 Companies)



42% of companies outlined that to a small extent current legislation stimulates companies to hire people with disabilities. 23% outlined to a moderate extent and 25% specified don't know if current legislation stimulates to hire people with disabilities.

Profit and Profitability (N=52 Companies)

35% of companies consider that by hiring people with disabilities the profit and profitability of a company will diminish. 31% did not know and 23% did not respond.

Specific Accommodations (N=52 Companies)

52% of companies stated that the company's working facilities could accommodate people with disabilities to a small extent. 23% stated to a great extent, 13% outlined not at all and 12% outlined did not know if the company's working facilities could accommodate people with disabilities.

HR Policies (N= 52 Companies)

46% of companies specified that HR policies facilitate the hiring of people with disabilities to a small extent. 23% specified to a great extent, 11% outlined to a moderate extent. 19% did not know if the company's HR policies facilitate the hiring of people with disabilities.

Obstacles (N= 52⁵ Companies)

42% of companies identified lack of new job openings as an obstacle that interferes with the company's policy of hiring more people with disabilities. 26% identified access to the work place as an obstacle, 12% outlined lack of qualifications, 8% outlined lack of information and 12% outlined other.

Further comments:

- *"There are no obstacles"; "We have employees with disabilities" - so for them there is no obstacle; "I can offer only one place of working".*
- *"Large physical element to our work which may hinder people with physical disability from certain roles"*

Measures to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities

Companies from Romania and Bulgaria referenced the importance of tax incentives and tax relief as a measure to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities

- *"A prompting motive for the employer will be some tax (social security) reduction in the employer's cost"*
- *"Information campaigns; tax relief"*
- *"The exemption of taxes"*
- *"Make taxes as low as possible"*
- *"Co-funding of salary and social security contributions from the state budget"*

⁵ *Note more than one option was chosen by companies

Common results across the 5 EU states included:

- (1) Improving and creating tailor made qualifications for people with disabilities within the workplace
- (2) Creating training opportunities for people with disabilities
- (3) Providing knowledge and training for employers and staff within companies
- (4) Ensuring appropriate measures are in place for a fully accessible work place
- (5) Support and incentives from the State in particular for small scale employers

Comments included:

- *“Most of the people with certain disabilities will be more competitive towards the labour market if the labour bureaus provide them some specific tailor made trainings”*
- *“Providing opportunities for improving qualifications of people with disabilities, organized by the employer from outside funding sources”.*
- *“Appropriate awareness training and enhancing employment opportunities for candidates with disabilities, and considering the requirements for a properly adjusted workplace”.*
- *“More awareness campaigns specifically at employers”The state should assist employers in creating the necessary facilities for handicapped people”.*
- *“Support to employer in matters which are not so familiar such as how to deal with disabled persons, where can I find and who’ll help me in the beginning”*
- *“More information and a right person to a right place”*
- *“Dissemination of knowledge that a disabled person mustn’t be seen as disabled but as a person who has specific competencies as well as others”*

Attitudes

All companies were asked to rate the following statements either true or false.

| Statement | True | False |
|--|------|-------|
| People with disabilities miss more days at the work place | 26% | 74% |
| People with disabilities are liable to more work related accidents | 33% | 67% |
| The costs of integrating people with disabilities are far greater | 31% | 69% |
| People with disabilities are less efficient | 16% | 84% |
| People with disabilities require special treatment at the work place | 72% | 28% |

Results of statements 2 & 3 may suggest that further information is required by employers in regards to Health & Safety at work and supports available to employers to accommodate employees with disabilities.

Examples of good practice /Successful experience of hiring people with disabilities

Employers in some circumstances noted that in some cases extra time and support had to be provided to employees with disabilities which would result in good outcomes.

- *“13 years ago I had an employee who had physical and mental disabilities. For this reason it was becoming extremely difficult and she has very low self-esteem. I managed to be satisfied with her services, but I was very patient with her, I complimented her when she was doing something good, and she felt valued. She has worked for me for four years”.*
- *“We have hired a person with physical disabilities for a part time job. During the entire period of working she made all her tasks very good.”*

Employers indicated that once accommodations e.g. part time work, providing suitable tasks etc. were made the employee would have the opportunity to integrate fully and carry out all necessary tasks.

- *“Lady employed in a management role with physical disability - job performance excellent once all necessary facilities were put in place”.*
- *“Such employees are hired on so called low risk positions. We had an employee at the reception desk (helping the receptionist on a half working day). Main responsibilities of the job were helping/ assisting in some logistic tasks. Another one we had in accounting department, it was a part time job as well, mainly connected with labeling envelopes and sending ready invoices to clients”.*
- *“About 5 years ago we hired an employee with a disability of lower limbs under an existing disability mainstreaming programme. His qualification is one of the best in the office and in practice he gets a higher salary than that of the programme. He has become a part of our team; he participates in our celebrations and our corporate outings in spite of the access problems. Or, to be more precisely, we choose places taking into account his possibilities to access them”.*
- *“The Center has hired as an expert a young employee with 100% hearing disability. She is assigned a work which is suitable for her. Requirements are consistent with the type of tasks of her job and not with her state. She is involved in the projects and activities of the organisation along with all other staff taking into consideration the nature of work she is expected to perform”.*
- *“We take in trainees from the National Learning Network regularly on a two day week basis. They work in warehouse & van delivery areas. They work well under instruction and often add efficiencies to speed of deliveries. Trainees tend to improve the attitude of full time staff to people with disabilities”*

- *“We have 2 people with disability employed in our company. Both employees are responsible for copying documents, running errands and going to the post office and the tax office if it is necessary. Sometimes they volunteer running personal errands for senior managers. They are everywhere and they are very popular. In some cases we have to write what we want as they are deaf but otherwise it is easy to communicate with them by using sign language. Two receptionists are responsible for them. If we need their services, we call the receptionists and they explain what to do”*

In some cases once an employee with a disability is placed successfully this enables employers to hire other people with disabilities.

- *“There was no other problem than prejudice in the very beginning when we hired a deaf person. Nowadays everything works fine (this person has been working in our company for 8 years). We also have deaf persons in doing data entry tasks and one employee with an intellectual disability who does packing things and our experiences are excellent.*
- *“The greatest challenge is the initiation into work but it usually goes well in the help of a professional job coach”*

Less Successful experience of hiring people with disabilities

Less successful experiences of hiring people with disabilities seems to be due to lack of communication and unsuitable tasks assigned to the employee with a disability.

- *“We had an employee with a hearing impairment. He was a fork lift truck driver. He was perfect in his job, but there were some days in a month when he made a lot of mistakes. He pushed the holder holding glass or used the horn all the time. We sent him to our doctor who examined his papers and sent him to the central clinic. When he returned he decided to leave the company as his hearing ability worsened. We don't know exactly whether it was due to the noise of the plant or if it was a natural process”.*

- *“Sometimes the disabled person and his/her parents have a difference in views and employer gets into an awkward situation”*
- *Very busy working place is not good for a person with an intellectual disability. Basic simple work and good facilitates guarantee a success of employing people with intellectual disabilities”*

Specific Problems Encountered when Employing People with Disabilities

Specific problems encountered when hiring people with disabilities were; lack of knowledge/experience of managing employees with disabilities, suitability of certain tasks for certain disabilities, lack of awareness from other staff members, lack of access to work premises.

- *“You must have a lot of patience to be sure that what you ask was understood. You should not crowd her with many tasks. If she is depressed you have to know how to talk to her. You need time, patience and interest in working with disabled people. ”*
- *“People with disabilities with whom I had interactions in my previous experience were all intelligent, proactive and hardworking people... and as such it is normal that they always want to develop further in the organization. The problem is that higher positions are linked to more responsibilities, frequent travelling, i.e. activities that most of the times are difficult to be handled by employees with certain disabilities. Maybe it is a good idea for the employer to think about more successful integration of these people in a long-term perspective. We have to think what future development could be offered to such groups of employees. For larger companies (of about thousands employees in total) with strong social policies maybe this is not an issue. Another issue we face is that we could not hire people with disabilities in most of the positions in manufacturing environment. That problem comes from the fact that in manufacturing area there are really specific job responsibilities and even the working environment is sometimes dangerous for such people”.*

- *“Regular staff were happy to work with a staff member with disability but evidence showed they did not want additional work pressures on themselves or delays that would not occur with “regular” staff”*
- *“Supervisors unsure how to manage people with certain disabilities”*
- *“The most frequent problem is access to the workplace. Especially in our case we have to be flexible with working hours because the working environment in certain periods can cause health problems.”*
- *“Reluctance of some of the other employees in the organization to adopt a more flexible communication methods; it is impossible to find training courses in the continuing training for people with disabilities (e.g. the need for specialized training in foreign language terminology); there are no courses designed for employees with disabilities”.*
- *“More information is needed. In the case severely disabled persons it has to consider the relation between wage and real working result” of a professional job coach”*

END